

## **Soaring to Success**

**Jo-An Vargo**

Watching birds soar on thermals was one of my favorite pastimes during my fall nature hikes in California. It's a time of migration along the Pacific flyway to winter homes for many species. Their efficiency of movement and clarity of focus in flight are attributes that we all strive for in our busy lives. Those attributes also bring to mind the talents of our Primary School teachers.

I've had the enjoyable task of reading about each and every Primary School student over the course of two weeks, and I've been struck by the thoughtful observation and assessment each teacher devotes to her/his students. Holland Hall teachers get to know each child over the course of the first ten or so weeks of school, much as my winged friends get to know the terrain during their journey. Our teachers observe and interact in very strategic ways to learn about their students' personal temperament, interests, and each child's unique constellation of skills. This is a fluid process of discovery and necessitates frequent interactions with children individually, in small groups, and during whole group instruction.

The information gained forms a baseline of information for the future growth that each child will experience under the guidance of our very qualified and capable professionals. Since the skill set of one classroom's students is never replicated in another class, our teachers must know their curricular material deeply. They also must identify the developmental stages of the children they teach in order to prepare, support, and stretch each child's optimal learning experience. It's a daunting task to provide the many and varied learning opportunities in all subject areas that are an integral part of an early childhood education. Our teachers understand how to create those opportunities to practice newly acquired skills and provide challenges that stretch a child just beyond the current level of mastery. It takes a master of efficiency and an individual who also has clarity of focus – two attributes I deeply admire and honor in Holland Hall teachers.